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University of Cincinnati
NEH Next Generation Humanities PhD
Final Report

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The University of Cincinnati is home to six humanities departments that grant PhDs:

Classics, English and Comparative Literature, German Studies, History, Philosophy, and

Romance Languages and Literatures. The 2016-2017 National Endowment for the Humanities

Next Generation PhD Planning Grant has allowed us to bring these diverse departments together

to plan a systematic, college-wide revision of doctoral programs in the humanities. The

collaborative spirit and good will generated during this year-long cross-departmental effort was

the broadest, most significant achievement facilitated by the grant. There can be no doubt that

representatives at the table recognized the value of continued interdepartmental conversations

and collaborations. This report details our more specific activities, achievements, shortcomings,

and goals for continued work.

Activities

David Stradling, Associate Dean for Humanities in the College of Arts and Sciences and

Professor of History, directed planning activities with the assistance of Anne Delano Steinert, a

doctoral candidate in History. Steinert's participation was secured through grant matches from the Graduate School and the College of Arts and Sciences.

We began our work by convening an eighteen-member, multi-departmental committee with representation and participation from five of the six PhD-granting departments, the university's Digital Scholarship Center, the Graduate School, outside representatives from philanthropy (Ohio Humanities), business (Procter and Gamble), and publishing (Orange Frazier Press), as well as current doctoral students. This group met monthly through the school year.

In the first semester, the committee hosted a series of three round table discussions designed to educate our group and other current students to existing needs and opportunities. The round tables were open events and were advertised through the departments, although each meeting attracted only a few non-committee members. The committee also had a short bibliography so that we could review some of the most relevant literature.

Our first round table discussion engaged **cultural and philanthropic employers**, bringing together the director of the Cincinnati Art Museum, the CEO of the Cincinnati Museum Center, the director of Cincinnati's largest arts funding organization, the owner of a private philanthropy advising firm, and a publisher. Take-away lessons from this round table included the importance of collaborative work, the value of internships, and the utility of some experience with budgeting and finance. This roundtable also helped to build bridges to these organizations which we hope will evolve into stronger partnerships.

Our second round table concerned **resources within the university**. This session included a representative from the College of Business, the Dean of the Graduate School, the director of the Masters in Arts Administration housed within the College Conservatory of Music, the Associate Provost who directs of the division of professional practice and experiential

learning, and the Assistant Vice President of Integrated Research. From this discussion we learned of a number of existing certificate programs that could enhance the education of our humanities PhDs, including marketing, finance, retail management, entrepreneurship, and human resources. Beyond these short certificate programs we explored the two-year Masters in Arts Administration as a model for coursework in the humanities. Finally, we established a sense for where innovation is occurring on our campus and the attitudes toward innovation held by the Provost's office and the Graduate School, both of which are interested in developing graduate-level internships.

Our final round table brought in **representatives from the business world**. This panel included a recently retired human resources professional from Procter and Gamble, a Cincinnati Bell executive, a lawyer involved in civic leadership development, and an executive at Adobe (who also holds a PhD in Philosophy). This roundtable clearly illustrated the divide between the worlds of academia and business which was most evident when one panelist began by saying that in all her years of employment, she had never seen an application come across her desk from someone with a PhD. This discussion made it very clear that if we want our students in the humanities to vie for jobs in the world of business, we must significantly augment the preparation they currently receive and the way we market the skills associated with PhD work to make these candidates attractive.

In the second semester Dr. Stradling worked to create curricular connections across the college through the creation of a shared HUM course code. This code will allow graduate students across the humanities (and beyond hopefully) to register for new courses emerging from the Next Gen effort. These courses may be in pedagogy, methods, theory, and writing.

The committee divided into three action areas: career development, writing, and methodology. Subcommittees worked to develop specific strategies and programs that will allow our students to develop a fuller understanding of the value of humanities inquiry and a better language to articulate this value to non-humanists. We believe these are first steps in preparing students to market their own strengths and talents. We hope to expose students to the work of humanists employed outside the academy, and help them develop skills for attaining and succeeding in similar positions.

The **career development subcommittee** focused on the development of internship opportunities and hands-on career training, such as resume development, professionalization, and workplace readiness. The outcome of this group's work was **the establishment of two year-long internships** for humanists within the university--one with the new University of Cincinnati Press, and one with our digital scholarship center. These internships, funded by the Graduate School, will begin in the fall. We anticipate that these internal internships will become permanent, and perhaps a model for other internal internships. We also hope that the success of these internships helps us build a culture of seeking and supporting internships with institutions and businesses outside the university.

The career development subcommittee also **designed a professional development workshop series** for graduate students in the humanities to be offered throughout the school year in conjunction with the university's career development center. As a pilot, we are organizing a shared orientation meeting this August that will, among other things, encourage students to contemplate their long-term goals from day one. It will begin the process of self-assessment and professional goal setting, and expose students to relevant campus resources. This orientation is

being developed by Alex Resley, an organizational specialist, retired from Procter and Gamble, and Anne Steinert.

The **writing subcommittee** worked on **a series of short-format, one-credit professional writing courses**. These courses were developed in conjunction with the Professional Writing program within the Department of English and the Academic Writing Center. These courses have the support of the Graduate School and will be taught by existing university faculty. While these courses will probably not become required for degree completion, advisors will encourage students to select from this menu of courses, and departments have pledged to create space within their existing course requirements to allow students to enroll without negative impacts to other coursework.

The **methodology subcommittee** explored the philosophy of humanistic research and pedagogy and decided to focus on developing programing that would help students and the interested public more fully understand and appreciate what humanists do. To achieve their goals this committee designed an innovative program to connect students to practitioners and connect the university to the public. Select students – Public Humanities Fellows supported by a modest stipend from the Graduate School – will develop **a series of workshops on the public humanities to be held off-campus**. The Public Humanities Fellows will come from each of the participating departments, and each will be responsible for developing one workshop related to their field. The fellows and other participating students will be able to sign up for **a new HUM course** to earn credit for participating in the full series of public humanities workshops.

Other initiatives developed from the committee's work beyond the three action areas. This included **a social initiative** designed to bring students together across the humanities. With leadership from Dr. Stradling and funding from the Graduate School, graduate student

association presidents in the humanities departments met to develop social networking opportunities across departments. This effort kicked off with an extremely well attended trivia night at a local restaurant in the second half of the spring semester. The great success of this event has encouraged us to schedule and support similar events each semester henceforth.

In addition, Anne Steinert created and **distributed a short survey to current and recent students –** those who earned a degree as well as those who did not. The results of the survey are still being analyzed. Lessons learned from the survey will be combined with student-outcome data to guide our future endeavors.

What Worked and What Didn't

The major accomplishments of our planning process were the creation of interdepartmental connections among both faculty and students, and the creation of new programs for students. Through the process of meeting and working together, our committee members developed **new relationships across departments** and came to understand the culture of departments other than their own. While most of us had assumed that other departments ran much like our own, we found a great deal of diversity in requirements, pacing, completion rates, onboarding procedures, and other policies. The appreciation of this diversity should increase interest in innovation. At the same time, the diversity highlighted the ways these differences serve as impediments to collaboration across departments. For example, as we work to plan our first humanities orientation program for August of 2017 we find that across our five participating departments, orientations range from six days of full-day activities, in departments where students will be teaching languages from day one, to half-day introductions of policies and procedures. The work instituted under this grant has begun to encourage new structures and

communication across these differences. In our final assessment, this was the aspect of our work that the members of our committee found most successful and rewarding.

The most tangible achievement of our committee has been the creation of many new student programs. These include the humanities orientation, the professional writing series, the Public Humanities Fellowship workshops, two internships, and the professional development workshops, all discussed above. We believe that each of our cooperating departments is working to make room in their curriculum to allow students to access these new options without adding to their existing course load, but it remains to be seen if our colleagues will be able to secure this needed accommodation as they take our work back to their own departments.

Areas of our work that were less successful included faculty engagement beyond the committee, curriculum reform, and dissertation reform. While these last two areas were a part of our grant proposal, we quickly realized (and our reviewers reminded us), that we had taken on too much. Because this was a planning grant, we set our sights instead on educating ourselves and planning significant student initiatives where we thought we could have the most impact in the short term. While we succeeded in creating useful student programs, we pushed faculty programming and curricular work back for a later implementation stage.

The largest impediments to progress in creating a truly transformative initiative were the composition of the committee and lack of time for more dedicated attention. From the outset, the outside reviewers expressed doubts at the ability of a committee composed almost entirely of academics to determine what students who wanted to work outside of the academy might need. We responded by adding non-academics and students to our committee, but we still had moments where our lack of experience left us unsure how to proceed. Similarly, the principal investigator and graduate assistant on this project are both people who wear multiple hats and

juggle many responsibilities. While we achieved a great deal under these circumstances, if we were to offer advice to future grantees, we would encourage then to create a diverse coalition of project advisors, and make sure that there is a dedicated project staff member who can move the process along efficiently.

Significant Planning Results

The response to this grant from both faculty and students has been universally positive. The support we have received – from the administration, department leadership, faculty, and students – reveals an extant, widespread acknowledgment of the significant problem facing the future of the humanities. In other words, the "culture shift" required to allow the evolution of humanities doctoral training is well underway at the University of Cincinnati. This is not to say that there isn't significant work to be done in the coming years. The habits of training students solely for the academic market will not shift overnight, and much of the real change will have to happen within programs, with curricular adjustments and changing expectations for dissertations. In the short term, we have chosen to make the changes that we thought were achievable within a year and within the structure of our committee. The changes we have left for the future are more daunting and will require much broader participation and more difficult discussions.

An example of this thought process is our action on dissertation reform. We chose not to begin necessary work on dissertation reform during this first year of our planning grant because we felt it would require a sustained, long-term approach. Within our own institution, dissertation requirements are wholly governed by individual departments under the belief that those teaching within that field are the best to determine mastery. As a relatively new associate dean, Dr. Stradling was unwilling to assert authority over individual departments and force conversations

around dissertation requirements. Likely most departments will be, and perhaps are now, willing to accept a suite of articles, a film, or an exhibit as a dissertation, but this does not guarantee that an alternative dissertation would better prepare students for the job market. At this point, alternative dissertations would almost certainly disqualify students from positions inside the academy. The system needs to be reformed not only in terms of what we accept as a dissertation, but more importantly, what those in publishing, industry, and academic advancement accept as valid credentials. As a first step in this process, this summer we have begun to plan a faculty education project in which we will bring in speakers to facilitate a discussion among humanities faculty about successful alternative dissertations.

We also hope to pursue more substantively the internship and co-op infrastructure. This was the single most frequently mentioned issue in the feedback we received from our committee members. In the short term we have established two permanent internship placements within important outward facing divisions of the university—our recently established university press and our digital scholarship center. This is an important development, but we need the assistance of a staff person whose position includes the networking and outreach necessary to generate internship opportunities in our region and beyond, as well as to encourage students to take advantage of these opportunities and counseling students to succeed in these placements.

Next Steps

As we prepare an application for the implementation grant, the University of Cincinnati's Next Gen effort will move forward with the programs we have established this year. These are the internships, professional development workshops, short-format professional writing courses, the Public Humanities Fellowship program and its connected lecture series, the humanities

orientation program, and cross-departmental humanities student events. These programs are all currently funded through resources within the university, have an institutional home where they will grow, and they will move forward regardless of whether we are successful in our bid for a Next Gen Humanities PhD implementation grant.

While we are thankful to have these programs in place, we hope to accomplish much more, ideally with the help of a Next Gen PhD implementation grant. That next set of hurdles will include the institutionalization of a comprehensive, professional internship program, thoughtful curricular review, and dissertation innovation.

In terms of our effort to disseminate our findings and plans beyond this white paper, we will begin by publicizing our new initiatives to students and faculty within the college using departmental email lists, Dr. Stradling's visits to department meetings, and the orientation program this August. We hope to reach alums through existing marketing and communication channels. As each of our initiatives move forward, we will have new opportunities to promote and celebrate it as a result of this Next Gen process. Our Public Humanities Fellowship lectures will allow us to reach out into the public realm to educate our community about the humanities and the work of their practitioners. As the series evolves, we anticipate additional media outreach and promotional activity.